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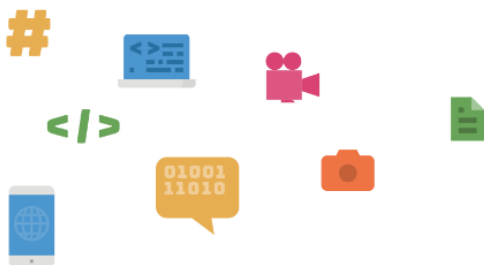
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL DIGITAL
30 November 2021



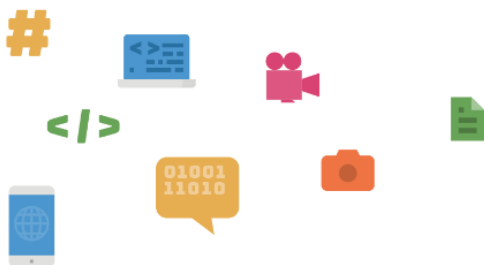
Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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PROJECT NUMBER: 612128-EPP-1-2019-1-BE-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
PROJECT TITLE: Social Hackademy - #hackAD



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Abstract

The Policy Recommendations reflect on the project experiences, analysis and evaluations and contribute to the transferability and exploitation of Social Hackademy methodology across Europe.

The document presents the Social Hackademy project and results, relevant policy documents and, finally, offers two sets of recommendations supporting transferability and further upscaling of the methodology and organisation of Social Hackademy Labs.

The recommendations were identified in collaboration with the project's stakeholders (trainers, civil society organisations, young people and project partners) and range from methodology specific to systemic recommendations that address the different roles of the recommendations' target groups.

Social Hackademy project partners recognize that transferring and implementing the methodology in different contexts follows the same mission but needs to be adapted to the national, regional and local realities to achieve the maximum impact. Nevertheless, the Social Hackademy Methodology core principles of co-creation that are used for developing digital solutions to societal challenges and empowering young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with digital skills can apply to a range of different realities across Europe and beyond.

The policy recommendations are translated into Croatian, French, Greek and Italian languages. The translated versions of the document are available on the [project website](#).





Project description

Project duration: 24 months

Start date: 15 January 2020

End date: 14 January 2022

Partner countries: Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy,

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union under action KA3 Social Inclusion.

Several EU policy initiatives underline that the social inclusion of young people depends on their access to ICT and them acquiring the necessary digital and transversal competences to participate in modern society. To address these challenges, the Social Hackademy (HackAD) project **aims at fostering digital skills and competences** of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds through the **implementation of collaborative educational activities** based on the Social Hackademy co-creation methodology.

Social Hackademy is based on the Social Hackathon Umbria (#SHU) methodology, a good practice implemented in Italy from 2016 onwards. The project upscaled good practice by building on three main elements/principles. The Social Hackademy Methodology fundamental principles are the:

- to **enhance the impact that the training activity** has on the learner by letting them experience how: (1) they can spend the competences acquired during the training in the realization of a concrete product or service, which is useful to the rest of the society, (2) cooperation and teamwork are key elements for the successful implementation of a project, and (3) answering to the needs of a certain target group cannot disregard the involvement of those directly affected by those needs or, at least, of some representative of relevant organizations.
- **acquiring basic (and/or advanced) digital competences** will ensure the sustainability of the developed solutions, and influence the technical/digital development, as well as the creative process, by ensuring an immediate quality check in terms of feasibility, relevance, usability, etc.





- motivated and skilled team managers who monitor and lead the co-creation process and guarantee the finalisation of the outputs are crucial for the successful implementation of the methodology.

The transition from the Social Hackademy Umbria good practice to a Social Hackademy Methodology is characterized by the evolution from an event-based approach to a permanent grass root initiative operating under the umbrella of a Social Hackademy Lab. The transition is characterised by moving from a product-oriented activity (such as classical hackathons) to a learning experience that is designed and facilitated by trainers in collaboration with civil society organisations and other stakeholders.

Therefore, the main role of the Social Hackademy Methodology is to support the implementation of innovative actions and projects with the final aim of demonstrating how digital and social innovation can mutually benefit for the realization of products and outputs based on social value and social investments while providing opportunities to young people for professional and personal growth.

The Social Hackademy project translated the methodology into a concrete set of activities consisting of training courses on digital skills for young people and Social Hackathons, both organised in the framework of Social Hackademy Labs.

Social Hackademy project key results are:

- **Social Hackademy Methodology** outlining key features of the transferred good practice and setting the framework for transfer and upscaling of the good practice. It is supplemented with instructional documents that support the preparation and organisation of Social Hackathons
- **Training Courses Outlines** addressed to the educators serve as an essential point of reference for the non-formal education of young people. The training courses are pivotal for equipping young trainees with digital competencies that will enable them to meaningfully participate in the Social hackathons. Three Course Outlines are available: Visual and Graphic Design, Web Design and Native Mobile App Development. All are accompanied by Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Handbook for Trainers.
- **Social Hackademy Online Platform** that supports the implementation of the Social Hackademy Labs and facilitates the development of online communities formed around them.



The platform acts as a hub by hosting training content, showcasing results of co-creation activities produced in training courses and Social Hackathons and facilitating networking and communication between young people, trainers, representatives of civil society organisations and other stakeholders included in co-creation or training activities.

- **Policy Recommendations** based on the results of training and piloting activities, for further transferability and upscaling of the project results.

During the project, project partners established Social Hackademy Labs in 4 European countries (Italy, Greece, Croatia and France) and, through Training Courses on digital skills in total duration of 100 hours, trained more than 120 young people aged 16-29 from (a third of them coming from disadvantaged background) on three topics: Native Mobile App Development, Web Design and Visual and Graphic Design. As part of the learning path, four Social Hackathons were organised in each country, during which the young participants had an opportunity to put into practice the newly acquired digital competences. To address any shortages in knowledge and competences, and foster learning about the importance of teamwork and collaboration they were teamed up with representatives and experts from civil society organisations in developing digital solutions to societal challenges linked to one or more of the 17 UN Goals for Sustainable Development. More detailed information about the Social Hackademy Labs activities results is available in the Comprehensive Piloting report published on the project website.

Key **project results** are available in **English, Croatian, Greek, Italian and Latvian** languages on the project website: <https://socialhackademy.eu/>.

Social Hackademy project partners:

- [ALL DIGITAL](#), Belgium – project coordinator
- [EGInA Srl](#), Italy
- [Centre of Technical Culture Rijeka](#), Croatia
- [Hellenic Open University](#), Greece
- [Simplon.co](#), France
- [Public Libraries 2030](#), Belgium





Empowering digital and transversal skills of young people and fostering social inclusion of youth – EU policy context

We must do everything to empower, support and inspire young people. To make sure they have the employment, education and training opportunities they deserve. - Ursula Von der Leyen,

European Commission President, 1 July 2020

The European Commission highlighted already in 2016¹ that Europe needs digitally savvy people for a successful digital transformation. At the same time, the realities shaped by digitalisation also require a policy framework that allows for the best use of opportunities and the regulation of risks. There are two dimensions of the EU policy in this area: the digitalisation agenda which, at times, refers to young people, but not through a separate agenda for all its citizens, and the youth policy agenda that is currently focused on promoting digital tools.²

It is easy to have a misconception that the digitalisation agenda began after 2020 COVID-19 pandemics but the truth is that since 2010 many European countries have engaged in developing policies and frameworks that address the process of digitalizing their societies. In this context, the European Union took on the responsibility to harmonise and coordinate these efforts. In the first half of the 2010s, the most focus in terms of priorities and funding was given to the connectivity or internet infrastructure. In recent years, more visibility has been given to education and inclusion, as only 56%³ of EU citizens have at least basic digital skills.

Starting in 2020, European Commission introduced a new EU digital strategy titled A Europe fit for the digital age⁴. One of the three pillars is particularly focused on “Technology that works for the people”, including actions that address investments in digital competences and the development of AI.

One of the priorities of the Digital Single Market for Europe 2014-2020 is “An inclusive e-society – The Commission aims to support an inclusive Digital Single Market in which citizens and businesses have the necessary skills and can benefit from inter-linked and multilingual e-services, from e-

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF>

² <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/053120+Study+on+SID+Web.pdf/0057379c-2180-dd3e-7537-71c468f3cf9d>

³ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/digital-economy-and-society-index-2021>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en





government, e-justice, e-health, e-energy or e-transport.” In this context, European digital inclusion is mainly focused on making ICT more accessible and using it to reduce marginalisation, which has resulted in the inclusion of the development of skills necessary in this new digital era as a specific priority within EU funding (EU Social Fund, Regional funds or Erasmus+). To monitor and evaluate the digital progress around the member states, the European Commission works in the framework of the European Semester⁵, publishing national reports and country-specific recommendations, as well as through the EU Digital and Economy Index (DESI)⁶ – a tool created to measure various digital dimensions, grouped around five main categories: connectivity, human capital, use of internet services, integration of digital technology and digital public services.

In 2016, the European Commission set up the expert group on “Risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy” coordinated by the Directorate General for Education and Culture – Unit C.1: Youth policy, to address the issue of the digital divide, among others.

European Skills Agenda⁷ aims to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and to put them to use, by strengthening sustainable competitiveness, as set out in the European Green Deal, ensuring social fairness, putting into practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights: access to education, training and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere in the EU and building resilience to react to crises, based on the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The digital divide for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of access to the internet and social media also leads to the “voice divide” on digital platforms. The European Commission’s communication: Shaping Europe’s digital future (February 2020) sets a new vision for Europe’s digital citizens, acknowledging that “the need for digital skills goes beyond the job markets”, and is closely connected with all aspects of professional and private lives. Thus, basic digital skills are a necessity for participation in a rapidly changing society and the labour market.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en

⁶ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>





One of the pillars of this approach is a Digital Education Plan 2021-2027 (DEAP)⁸ which European Commission introduced in September 2020. The DEAP has two strategic priorities: (1) To foster a high-performing digital education ecosystem; and (2) To enhance digital skills and competences for the digital age. The COVID-19 crisis has reinforced the need to promote a sound understanding of the digital world and support the development of the digital competence of citizens and learners of all ages. Action 10 under Priority 2 - Enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation aim to empower young Europeans from early ages to develop basic and advanced digital skills through education and training.

In February 2021 the Council adopted the Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)⁹ that builds on previous education and training strategies, namely Education and Training 2010 and The Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020). the ET2030. Specifically, during the next decade, the strategic framework will address the following five strategic priorities:

- Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training;
- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all;
- Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession;
- Reinforcing European higher education;
- Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training.

Social Hackademy project contributed towards the objectives of EU policies in the field of education and training, specifically by enhancing the digital skills of young people and improving accessibility for these types of non-formal education to young people with fewer opportunities.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

⁹ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01))





Recommendations for transferability and implementation of the Social Hackademy methodology

The Social Hackademy Methodology has upscaled an Italian good practice (Social Hackathon Umbria) and formalized in the Social Hackademy project to achieve objectives set in the project proposal. The piloting of the methodology showed that the transfer and upscaling have been successful as indicated by overwhelmingly positive evaluations by involved stakeholders (trainers, young people, civil society organisations and their representatives).

Nevertheless, the impact of the COVID-19 on the implementation of activities was significant. The Social Hackademy Methodology is implemented through Social Hackademy Labs and feature two type of activities. Training courses on digital skills and Social Hackathons. Both activities were initially planned to be organised as face-to-face activities, but the piloting plan had to be adapted to accommodate to the COVID-19 restrictions in force between March – May 2021. This meant that all training courses had to be organised online instead of face-to-face. This proved challenging because of the fatigue related to the online activities, less possibilities for peer learning and it limited the scope of interactions between trainers and trainees. On top of that it also decreased the effectiveness of the inclusion of the participants with fewer opportunities because the support trainers could provide to them via online interaction has been limited.

Project partners devised two sets of recommendations addressing transferability and further upscaling of the methodology, and implementation of the activities foreseen by the methodology.

The recommendations by design target multiple stakeholders:

- the authorities on local, regional, national and European levels
- education providers in (primarily) non-formal and formal education
- and policy makers in the field of youth policy, skills development, digitalisation and participation.

They [recommendations] should be used in conjunction with other Social Hackademy project deliverables and reports: Social Hackademy Methodology guide, Training Courses Outlines, Handbook for Trainers and Comprehensive Piloting Report.





The following recommendations are based on partners experiences and lessons learned during the development and piloting of the Social Hackademy Methodology and in-depth evaluations provided by young people, trainers and representatives of civil society organisations that participated in the Social Hackademy Labs piloting activities and presented in the Comprehensive Piloting Report.

Upscaling and transferability recommendations

- The **character of Social Hackademy Methodology is multidimensional**. The combination of experience in multiple backgrounds and synergies among different stakeholders (formal and non-formal education and training providers, civil society and grassroots organisations, experts, practitioners and policymakers) should be encouraged to cover extensively all its aspects and achieve high-quality co-creation processes.
- The **potential impact of Social Hackademy Methodology results is big**, but it greatly depends on the engagement of the relevant stakeholders to be realized. Systematic and continuous effort is required to keep them informed about the developments of the planned activities and their possible impact
- **Co-creation (core process built in the Social Hackademy Methodology) can be a factor of change** and education and training plays a key role. Among all stakeholders, young people serve as the change-makers and therefore must be the primary targets of training activities. The Social Hackademy project primarily targets exactly them, offering an arsenal of training possibilities: Training courses on digital skills, Social Hackathon, hackers' online community and platform.
- **A well-supported community is needed to ensure high impact and long-time sustainability of results**. The Social Hackademy approach (training the trainers who will train teachers/trainers who will train and work with young people) ensures the scalability of impact. The continuous support of the education providers through online platforms leads to increased numbers and participation. Trained trainers (and teachers) and students themselves act as multiplication agents.
- **Practical activities leading to tangible outcomes are a key component of the Training Courses for digital skills**. This increases interest in co-creation activities.



Increased interest and participation increase impact and sustainability. The Social Hackademy training courses and hackathons focus on everyday societal issues and find digital solutions for them. In the end, developed solutions solve real-life problems.

- Co-creation processes have a **big potential for a positive impact on the social inclusion** of young people and motivate them for active participation in society.
- **Identifying trainers needs and addressing them through train the trainers activities is pivotal for a successful implementation of the methodology.** Trainers are in the centre of the Social Hackademy methodology. They don't only empower young people by providing them digital skills training but act as a bridge between them, civil society organisations and participating experts. For them to be able to successfully fulfil this role they need to be equipped with skills that support meaning adequate support to the trainers is a key for successful implementation of the train of the trainers because Hackathons are quite successful when the right support is given by the facilitators.
- **Building relationships with civil society organisations in the planning stages of the Social Hackademy Methodology activities.** Civil society organisations represent a key stakeholder in the preparation and implementation of Social Hackademy Methodology activities. Creating a moment of guided exchange, discussion among the civil society organisations and trainers before the start of the Social Hackademy activities eases the peoples' understanding of the objectives, which for those completely new to the co-creation process and the use of digital technology in the social sector is not always immediate.
- **Include and work with young people in the implementation of the Social Hackademy activities as early as possible.** Creating a moment of exchange, discussion before the event to inform the participants about the project complexity and different actors, and to make them feel part of it it's very important. Starting an early brainstorming among the team member about the solution could ease and fasten the process to produce more complete solutions.
- **Support young people with fewer opportunities to boost their participation in Social Hackademy activities.** The Social Hackademy Methodology does not provide specific training for education providers on the social inclusion of young people. There are





many resources and training activities available that should be exploited by trainers and teachers to provide the right support to young people with fewer opportunities that enables them equal and full participation.

- **Social Hackademy Methodology should be exploited to enhance the cooperation between formal and non-formal education.** On the local level, cooperation with University and VET schools could be beneficial to further use parts of the methodology or whole methodology. The methodology developed could be adjusted in a way that students develop solutions with civil society organisations as a part of their practical work or service-learning/community-based learning.

Recommendations for organizers of the Social Hackademy Labs

- The **Training Courses and Social Hackathons should be organised in a face-to-face format** for them to be successful in any educational context since peer learning and the exchange of ideas and feedback that happen in face to face environment have a great impact on the quality of learning thus leading to better results.
- The **length of the training courses should be adjusted** to the learning curve of the training course topics and more time for exercises should be integrated into the Training Courses than initially planned. That will help students to be more efficient during the Hackathon and prepared to handle more complex projects.
- **Organise a short, one week, production session** during which participants from all Training Courses will be divided into teams and work on tasks defined by the trainer. That will allow them to get to know each other, develop relationships and become acquainted with the skills, knowledge and interest of team members. This will lead to better results during the Hackathon.
- **Cooperation with civil society organisations has to be formalized.** Formalizing the cooperation provides a clear overview of the commitments and expectations towards the participating civil society organisations in terms of their tasks, availability during the Training Courses and Social Hackathon.



- **Explore the possibilities to collaborate with a formal education system.** The methodology of Social Hackathon can be easily integrated in the formal educational system in a form of competition among schools, community-based learning, volunteering, but in our experience, a competition should always be a part of it since it increases engagement and motivation of students, has a very clear timeframe and allows practising of useful and needed transversal and social skills. In addition, doing a project with a strong social and civic component, as well as projects that are later on used by organisations or the general public, have a stronger impact on students' further engagement in the local community.
- When **transferring the methodology to your context, a certain amount of localization of training courses should be considered.** Localisation can vary according to the age of the target group or specific tools and experts available. Upscaling of the particularities of methodology should depend on the resources of organisations that will implement the methodology. The number of training courses can be higher or lower, providing higher or lower flexibility to create digital solutions.
- **Provide additional time and space** to young participants and civil society organisations after the Social Hackathon to revise their solutions based on initial feedback from the jury and finalize them after Social Hackathons. These revised solutions can also be presented at a series of public events, where young people will have the chance to talk with experts, activists and members of the community most impacted by their solutions.
- **The background of the participating young people should be well documented** to account for their expectations, capacity, training and support needs. This enables the organizers of activities to devise and implement specific measures that enable all young participants equal and meaningful participation.
- **A Welcome Session should be held on the first day of the Social Hackathon** to allow participants to familiarize themselves with their teams and the challenges. All relevant players should participate in one room and facilitate an open dialogue on what constitutes a viable and sustainable solution.

